

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Infant Mortality Rate amongst African-American Infants Fell Sixty Percent in Howard County

Howard County experienced a major decline in infant mortality, down from a rate of 7.6 in 2015 to 4.8 in 2016. This decrease is largely due to the drop in deaths amongst African-American infants, which fell by sixty percent (60%).

The Howard County Health Department (HCHD), with support from community partners, introduced several initiatives to reduce infant mortality and address two of the leading causes of infant mortality: low birth weight and unsafe sleep.

In 2015, HCHD began three programs to address infant mortality.

- *Safe Sleep Campaign* - to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of safe sleep for babies
- *Cribs for Kids® Program* - to provide eligible families with a safe place for their infant to sleep.
- *EliMinate Premature Outcomes With Education and Resources (EMPOWER)* - to build partnerships to reduce preterm birth rates in Howard County by increasing awareness, generating urgency around the issue and promoting resources to close the disparity gap.

“Infant mortality is an important public health concern, as it is an indicator of the community’s health,” said Howard County Health Department Child Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Dougé. “The decline in infant mortality is an important example of community partnership efforts to improve infant health.”

Dr. Maura J. Rossman, Howard County Health Officer adds, “The reduction of infant deaths amongst African-American infants in one year is promising. The Health Department and partners will continue to address the causes of infant mortality with further decreases in infant mortality rates as our goal.”

In order to continue this downward trend, Howard County can help support women to achieve optimal health both before and during pregnancy. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, encouraging early prenatal care, getting proper nutrition, and managing chronic conditions such as stress and diabetes will help ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes for Howard County mothers and their babies.

For more information about any of these programs, visit the Howard County Health Department website at [www.hchealth.org](http://www.hchealth.org).



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